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Waldheim Record Wasn't Checked, Austrian Says

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UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., April 25 — Kurt Waldheim, the former United Nations Secretary General, was hired in 1946 as the personal secretary to Austria's Foreign Minister because American intelligence agencies said he was not a Nazi, according to the minister's top lieutenant, who had himself worked for American intelligence.

But the official, Fritz Molden, the Foreign Ministry First Secretary who investigated Mr. Waldheim at the behest of Foreign Minister Karl Gruber, said Mr. Waldheim's three years' service as a first lieutenant in the Balkans, where he was part of a German Army command that conducted reprisal killings of Yugoslav partisans and deported thousands of Greek Jews, was never investigated.

Reached by telephone at his home in Alpbach, Austria, Mr. Molden said, "The Austrian police were not capable of collecting any intelligence data, and how should the Americans have known about a minor man?"

Mr. Waldheim is now running for the presidency of Austria.

In the years immediately after World War II, Austria was intent on rebuilding, Mr. Molden said, and unless a man was a Nazi Party member or had directly taken part in atrocities, "his service wasn't considered important."

Mr. Molden's comments came as Mr. Waldheim's son, Gerhard Waldheim, said in Washington that a report recommending that his father be barred from entering the United States because of his actions as a Wehrmacht officer was based on insufficient evidence.

"As far as I'm concerned, the bottom line is very simple," Gerhard Waldheim said. "Kurt Waldheim was not a Nazi."

The younger Waldheim was responding to reports on Thursday that the Justice Department's chief Nazi-hunter, Neal Sher, had recommended that Kurt Waldheim be barred from entering the United States.

Mr. Molden was an Austrian resistance fighter who entered the Foreign Service after serving as a lieutenant colonel in the O.S.S., the American wartime intelligence agency, where he was the liaison officer between Austrian partisans in Italy and Allen W. Dulles, the head of the Swiss office of the O.S.S. who was to become the head of the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1950's. Mr. Molden married Mr. Dulles's daughter, Joan, in 1948.

Because of the sensitivity of the position Mr. Waldheim sought, Mr. Molden said he asked O.S.S. contacts in Vienna and the American Counter-Intelligence Corps to investigate Mr. Waldheim, a search that probably consisted of checking his name on lists of Nazi Party membership.

"Both C.I.C. and O.S.S. got in touch with us after a few days and said, 'Go ahead. As far as we know, this man is not a Nazi.'"

German Army records show that Mr. Waldheim was enrolled in 1938 in two Nazi-affiliated organizations, the Nazi student union and the mounted unit of the paramilitary organization known as the Brownshirts. Mr. Molden said that since neither of these groups was considered "criminal," their rolls would not have been checked.

Mr. Molden characterized Mr. Waldheim as "a man who is not a hero, not the type of guy who goes into the underground."

He was part of a generation of Austrians, Germans and Italians "who have subconsciously misled themselves and their own children and the world by pushing a lot of things that happened 40 years ago under the nearest carpet," Mr. Molden said. "In that era, that was considered the honorable thing to do."

"In a way," he said, "we are guilty for not cleaning up the mess in 1945."

Although Mr. Waldheim had regular contact with officials from the occupying powers, Mr. Molden said, he was "too gray, too pragmatic" to work in counterintelligence for one of them.

But he did not rule out the possibility that Mr. Waldheim might have been blackmailed by someone with knowledge of his wartime service. "They say now in Austria that Russia might have blackmailed him," he said. "That might have been the case in 1972 when he was Secretary General."